

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 13033

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MNUC TECH IN FR PK US
SUBJECT: PRESS COVERAGE OF PAKISTANI REPROCESSING PLANT ISSUE

REF: STATE 215950 (NOTAL)

1. THE DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING ON THE PAKISTANI-FRENCH REPROCESSING PLANT ISSUE (REFTEL) WAS EXTENSIVELY REPORTED IN THE NEW DELHI PRESS AUGUST 26. MOST NEWS-PAPERS USED THE REUTERS DISPATCH ON INSIDE PAGES UNDER THE HEADINT THAT THE USG "HOPES TO" OR "MAY SOON" RESUME AID TO PAKISTAN AS A RESULT OF THE REPORTED FRENCH DECISION NOT TO SELL THE PLANT TO PAKISTAN. "THE INDIAN EXPRESS" USED STORY AS PAGE ONE LEAD UNDER HEADING THAT THE US WILL RESUME AID. THE EXPRESS' WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT, T V PARASURAM, WROTE THAT THE STATE
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DEPARTMENT "CAUTIOUSLY INDICATED" THAT PAKISTAN WILL GET A RESUMPTION OF FRESH ECONOMIC AID AS A "CONSOLATION PRIZE" FOR THE REPROCESSING PLANT. PARASURAM ALSO QUOTES FROM "THE WASHINGTON POST" THAT THE FRENCH WITHDRAWAL FROM THE DEAL IS A MAJOR TRIUMPH FOR THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S NON-PROLIFERATION POLICY AND WILL BRING NEW PRESSURES ON WEST GERMANY TO CANCEL ITS

DEAL WITH BRAZIL. "THE STATESMAN" CARRIED A SIMILAR STORY FROM ITS LONDON CORRESPONDENT.

2. THE PRO-MOSCOW "PATRIOT" AUGUST 27 WEAVES THE REPROCESSING/AID RESUMPTION STORY INTO A FRONT PAGE ARTICLE WHICH CRITICIZES THE GOI'S DELAY IN MAKING THE DPSA DECISION AND ALLEGES THAT THE US BUILDING UP A "PAK-FRENCH-CHINA AXIS." ACCORDING TO THE "PATRIOT", THE USG BANNED THE SALE OF THE VIGGEN TO INDIA SO THAT THE FRENCH WOULD HAVE A BETTER SHOT AT GETTING THE DPSA AWARD AND THUS BE COMPENSATED FOR THE LOSS OF THE PAKISTAN NUCLEAR DEAL. IN TURN, THE "PATRIOT" SAID, THE PAKISTANIS WOULD GET F5E'S AND THE CHINESE WILL PICK UP ON PROVIDING THEM THE REPROCESSING PLANT. MOST NEWSPAPERS AUGUST 27 ALSO REPORT AMBASSADOR GOHEEN'S REMARKS AT A PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON THE PREVIOUS DAY IN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE REPROCESSING PLANT AND ARMS TO PAKISTAN (ICA MEDIA REACTION REPORT NO. 440). ALTHOUGH HEADLINES DISTORTED THE REMARKS SOMEWHAT, ARTICLES ACCURATELY QUOTED AMBASSADOR TO EFFECT THAT IF IT WERE TRUE THAT REPROCESSING PLANT IS OFF, PAKISTAN WOULD BE FREE TO ASK FOR ARMS SALES, AS ARE OTHER COUNTRIES OF SUBCONTINENT. ARTICLES ALSO REPORT AMBASSADOR'S EXPLANATION OF US POLICY OF ARMS RESTRAINT IN SUBCONTINENT.

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3. THE REPROCESSING PLANT STORY HAS GENERATED TWO EDITORIALS. "THE STATESMAN" AUGUST 26 CALLED THE DECISION "NO COMFORT FOR INDIA." WHILE THE INDIANS MIGHT HAVE SOME MISGIVINGS ABOUT PAKISTANI NUCLEAR INTENTIONS, "THE STATESMAN" SAID, THE GOP DESERVED SUPPORT FOR RESISTING THE PRESSURES OF THE NUCLEAR SUPPLIER'S CARTEL. " THE STATESMAN" ALSO SAW THE CANCELLATION AS REFUTING VIEW OF THOSE WHO THOUGHT THE FRENCH MIGHT BECOME AN ALTERNATE SUPPLIER OF ENRICHED URANIUM FOR TARAPUR. THE EDITORIAL INTERPRETED THE "SUBDUE PAKISTANI REACTION" AS LENDING CREDENCE TO THE REPORT THAT THE GOP HAS DECIDED TO STRENGTHEN ITS CASE FOR "MORE SUPPLIES OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS FROM THE US, ESPECIALLY OF A-7 STRIKE AIRCRAFT" BY ABANDONING THE REPROCESSING PROJECT. IN AN EDITOORIAL AUGUST 28, "THE TIMES OF INDIA" CALLED THE COLLAPSE OF THE FRANCO-PAKISTANI DEAL A VICTORY FOT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION AND SPECULATED THAT THE PAKISTANIS WILL NOW TURN TO THE CHINESE FOR REPROCESSING PLANT ASSISTANCE. "THE TIMES" CONCLUDED THAT SUCH A MOVE BY THE PRC WOULD CAUSE A SETBACK TO ITS EFFORTS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH INDIA.

GOHEEN

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